

The Innis Herald



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North American Matters: Conservative Canada, Liberal USA The World According to Matthew Marshall

Who cares that Bush won, it's their country, and democracy works! But in the words of Jon Stewart: "Democracy works; against us." But we as Canadians should care about this past election as the ramifications of the policies of the American president have far-reaching effects on the whole world. As the world's dominant military power, I doubt that anyone in Iraq or Afghanistan would argue that America and its leaders don't matter. For the loggers in BC, and the ranchers in Alberta, the border closures against beef and softwood lumber make these things matter. While Kerry's protectionist leanings may not have caused much of a change on these fronts, the policies of an American president on these issues, which seem so insignificant to many Ontarians, can have a huge impact on our fellow Canadians.

The main example of one issue where Kerry would have been very different than Bush is missile defense. Our government is under a lot of pressure from the current administration to join the so-called Missile Defense Shield, an unproven method of destroying incoming missiles. If Canada doesn't join, the project will proceed without us and thus render NORAD irrelevant; as such, Canada will be completely out of the loop in terms of the continent's air security. If Kerry had won, missile defense would be out the window and we wouldn't have to worry about the cost, the risks and the domestic political fallout. The

current Liberal government could very well fall as a result of this issue, an issue decided by Americans.

For better or for worse, America runs the international military and economic scene. They unofficially call the shots at the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and sometimes at the UN. In the past 4 years alone, the US has launched military attacks against two countries and protectionist trade policies against Canada, Europe and several other countries. Even a small difference between leaders could have had a huge impact on the rest of the world. So, for those Canadians who so casually brush aside the issue of who wins the American election as irrelevant to us as Canadians, just remember: America matters.

Conservative Canada:

A common target of much of the world's and Canadian press is the United States. Seemingly shocked at the results of the American election, Canadians are far too often smug and arrogant in believing we are superior than a country that would re-elect a man named W. After all, Canada is at the forefront in advancing the liberal agenda: gay marriage, decriminalization of marijuana, racial harmony, and universal health care are some of our innovations. Perhaps we are right in our smugness, and our superiority towards the beast next door is justified?

Wrong. While from the perspective of a liberal, in the American sense of the

word, Canada has made impressive advances with the support of a large part of the population, our status as the world's leading liberal nation is relatively recent. In particular, the legalization of gay marriage - a "hot-button" issue - has only recently been enacted in several Canadian provinces, and ten years ago, such an effort would have most likely faltered with lukewarm popular support.

Moreover, the journey to Canada the Good has been a long and gradual development. How much of what we hold as common and normal today would be held as shocking 20, or even 10, years ago? Even now, the most liberal views are confined to a majority of urban dwellers while rural areas tend to be populated with more conservative opinions. Note once again the similarities between "smart" Canada and "silly" USA: The vitriol directed at New York and the "liberal elite" in the Northeast is not so different from that spite directed against Toronto by just about all of Canada.

Liberal America:

During the past American presidential election, exit pollsters asked, "What was the deciding factor in casting your vote for president?" They gave respondents a selection of choices to decide amongst. Close to 1 in 5 voters said "moral values" was very important to them. This prompted anguished soul-searching among democrats about whether an enormous right-wing religious conspiracy had taken over America. But there are a number

of problems with this view, foremost being the wording of the question: Who, after all, doesn't have "moral values"? Furthermore, the holding of "moral values" can be used to justify opposition against anything from gay marriage to the war in Iraq. It's like the old adage says, "Ask a stupid question, get a stupid answer."

Now what about the other 4 of 5? Polls asking more specific questions of public opinion on the aforementioned gay marriage revealed something interesting: the more than 35% of Americans who support gay marriage outnumber those who declare they are dead-set against it. Another roughly 30% support civil unions, a step only now being taken in Britain and Germany. That's a total of approximately 65% who favour, at the very least, civil unions for homosexuals, when compared to perhaps 20% who feel that it is terrible. That 65% number has been the one that is increasing, not the number of anti-gay marriage advocates, which also happens to roughly correspond to the number of evangelical Christians.

The real issue isn't why Americans are so conservative - because they aren't any more conservative than your average Canadian - but why do they VOTE for ultra-conservatives? How does the Republican Party manage to convince people to vote against not only what they believe in, but what is against their economic interests?

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Innis Herald World

Tsunami Information

Editor-in-chief Stephanie Silverman urges you to read further and get more involved

In times of awesome tragedy—in the traditional, Biblical sense of the word—newspaper editorials are not enough. It would be a little too egocentric, a little too stereotypically “Western” to separate ourselves from the devastation in Asia and pretend that the tsunami isn’t going to affect us profoundly. The threat of fatal repercussions is too real to ignore, and we are simply ignorant if we feel immune from the disease and damage still to come. It is particularly unsettling to our acceptance of the established norms of Christianity and Consumerism that thousands of people lost their lives while much of North America (including myself) eagerly shopped for discounted sweaters and jeans. A natural disaster trumps all machinations of civilization, and proves that we all do live on the same earth and can fall prey to its ecological cycles. All of this is not to belittle our own very real problems of school, life, survival; it’s just that, living pretty far from an ocean and ensconced in our blanket of winter, it’s too easy to focus only on ourselves to the detriment of others who are truly in need.

This issue of the Innis Herald is intended as a celebration of the things we usually toast and roast: film, music, art, the environment and politics. We are *not* a newspaper; we only come out once a month, have a shoestring budget, and recognize that there are other publications that do the news and do it well. Most of this issue was put together in the weeks before the tsunami and is therefore not concerned with it. This editorial is a last-minute, stop-the-presses addition, and I hope to use it as a platform of information and action within a Herald focused on “lighter” matters.

Please read the following information provided by the laudable Student Volunteer Program (TSVP) and contact either them or us if you would like to get involved with efforts to help the tsunami victims:

A violent underwater earthquake off the island of Sumatra sent huge waves crashing into coastal areas from East Asia to Africa. The 9.0 magnitude earthquake generated a mas-

sive tsunami that propagated across the Indian Ocean reaching incredible speeds. As the wave neared coastal areas, its speed considerably decreased, but was still powerful and high enough to head inland, destroying everything in its path. The tsunami has wreaked havoc on the communities of eleven countries from Indonesia to Somalia, claiming thousands of lives, displacing millions and leaving billions of dollars worth of damage. The current conservative death toll of 75,000 continues to grow as millions face a bleak future as the threat of diseases and more deaths loom large.



Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena)

In the wake of this unmitigated disaster, the largest relief effort in history has been started with numerous international, national and community aid agencies stepping up efforts to channel much needed aid to these countries. To these efforts, TSVP is partnering with Canada-based international and community aid agencies in collecting monetary funds, medical supplies and other essential items to be shipped to various countries. The University of Toronto at St. George chapter of TSVP

is committed to carrying this relief effort through its role in the “Tsunami Relief Fund,” an ad-hoc committee comprising of student groups, faculty and administration on our campus. This chapter’s efforts through the relief fund will be focused primarily at our school as we aim to actively encourage student involvement in not only raising funds and collecting material goods during the emergency response phase, but also to lobby the Canadian government and multilateral agencies in stepping up their financial and social commitment to meet the needs of the millions affected, and overcome this global disaster.

At this important juncture, TSVP-St. George extends its support to all campus groups and individuals in their commendable efforts to deal with this crisis. We also continue to actively seek the partnership of fellow student groups, faculty and administration under the umbrella of the Tsunami Relief Fund to coordinate efforts in raising funds at the University of Toronto at St. George.

For more information, please contact: stgeorge@tsvp.ca / (647) 297-7533 or innis.herald@utoronto.ca

Why America Matters

...Continued from Cover

The economic policies of the Republican Party favor very few wealthy people. But if you break down support of Democrats and Republicans, the Democrats have the support of more wealthy voters while the Republicans get the support of the very people they’ve been disenfranchising.

The party is able to win this support by distracting the public by fanning big issues out of non-issues, the case is point being Kerry’s service record. Coupled with this rhetoric assault is the complacency of the lackluster news media, an outlet dominated by right-wing owners and left-wing entertainment. Rupert Murdoch may own Fox News and broadcast such shows as the O’Reilly Factor, but he also owns its seamy parent network Fox, most recently fined for the racy “Who

wants to marry my dad?” television “special”. This strange fact highlights one of the more perplexing questions about Americans: Why do they vote “right” even as they lean ever more “left”? The answer could very well be the dominant right-wing news media, and its stranglehold on public opinion. Many voters are out of touch with the positions of the people they are voting for and what those positions could mean to them. It is the job of the free and independent press to inform the public; but, sadly for American citizens and happily for the Bush dynasty, the media fails to do so. And although the cycle of misunderstanding and media manipulation continues, we would be well-



served in Canada to remember that our American neighbors are not so different than us.

Did We Not See This Coming?

Matthew Lau rants about the state of professional sports

Before we begin, here's a little context for those of you who are otherwise unfamiliar with the fascinating world of grown men tossing and retrieving leather balls. On November 19th, players and fans exchanged punches at a nationally-broadcasted NBA game in arguably the worst brawl in North American sports history. To make a long story short, a full cup of beer was thrown and struck a player by the name of Ron Artest, a 250-pound hulk renowned for his perpetual rage, in the face while he was already in the middle of a heated encounter with another player. Accordingly, Artest immediately charged into the stands and began his retaliation. Fans united and fought back, and thus many players pitched in on the action as well. Next thing we know, the punches escalated into a battle royale that is usually seen only on a WWE wrestling pay-per-view special, or a European soccer match, where they simply call occasions like that *interruptions*.

Some might frown when I say that Mr. Artest *accordingly* sought revenge for the cup thrown at his face. But is that not precisely the sort of behavior we cultivate in a professional sports player like him? Mind you, here is a guy who has spent the past seven years of his life doing nothing but throwing his body nightly against other 250+ pound beasts who are just as physically monstrous as he is. Here is a guy whose success is guaranteed as long as he spends half his days pumping iron, whose performance is applauded as long as he continues to out-terrorize his opponents on the court. And his face has just been hit by a cup of beer. Are we honestly expecting him to sit down and write a complaint letter?

Now I am no 6'7 and 250-pound man; but if I am (along with my 5-6, 135 pound frame) habituated to the way these players are and you throw beer at my face in the heat of battle, you best believe I'd be coming straight for your ass, too.

Overall, nine NBA players were suspended, with five now charged with assault. They were said to have "tarnished" the image of NBA and professional sports in general with their actions.

Okay, come on now. Suspensions? Sure. Police charges?

Fine. But tarnishing the image of professional sports? With their actions? It boggles my mind that the players can blemish sports' image by doing what they did. I mean, what sort of image can we be talking about here?

The image of fairness? Sure. Now by fairness we mean no biases or partialities, right? Equal opportunities for everyone? For example, in a boxing match, when one of the men is struck down after repeated vicious blows to the head, into a semi-unconscious state, unable to perform any reasonable behavioral tasks, *to be fair*, the other is required to back down and wait until the victim on the ground can regain enough strength to stand up again before the two are allowed to continue smashing each other senseless. That is an example of the image of fairness in sports we are trying to establish, right? Or when two hockey players, after various attempts at disfiguring each other by pushing faces into sideboards or by slamming heads into solid ice, decide that it is time to settle their differences in the form of a

mid-game sparring match, *for fairness and good sportsmanship*, they first throw away their sticks and gloves before delivering fero-



A raging Stephen Jackson is led off the court

cious blows to each other's heads. That is another demonstration of the sportsmanship we are talking about, no?

Well, if that is the case, I still don't see why Artest's action was detrimental. Surely the fans were allowed to strike back when Artest was pummeling them – and believe me, they did; as well, from what I could see, nobody was using any gloves or hockey sticks when they were duking it out. I also don't recall Artest going after any fans on the ground – he was already quite occupied with the ones standing, really. So what was the matter? How was what he did unfair compared to what happens in, say, boxing and hockey?

And if it's not the image of fairness that was trashed, what could it be? The image of competitiveness? I think that possibility can be ruled out as well. I don't think we need to question Artest and co's competitiveness when they were so absorbedly involved in the melee. The players were as competitive as they could ever be, believe me; do you really think any of them could stand the thought of being beaten up by fans on national television?

What else? The image of excellence and dedication? This one can be easily crossed off as well. Anyone who saw the videos of the brawl would agree that the players were quite dedicated in their attempts to demolish their foes; they fought with intensity, aggressiveness, and were just all-round hustling. And looking at some of the

punches that were thrown, they were quite good at it, too. 'Tie Domi would have been proud.

Truth is, if we really want to explore this "image" that contemporary North American sports have been presenting, we are not going to find it much different than the circus that took place on November 19th. Nothing was tarnished: fighting is already part of our sports; violence is already part of the culture. We should have seen this coming a long time ago. It shouldn't

have caught us off guard. But it did. Well, guess what, it's time to man up and get ready for more. It's just part of the game.

Perhaps you disagree. Maybe you still think that there is something inherently wrong about people smacking the living daylight out of each other, something a little unprofessional, something a little unsportsmanlike. That's fine. Which brings us to my point: maybe it is time to cut this macho bullshit that's been pissing all over professional sports in the past couple decades. That's right, cut it out. Enough already.

Want to know what is really tarnishing my sports? All this violence, this unnecessary fighting and aggression that is getting more prevalent by the day just because they are continuously demanded by those with testosterone falling out of their pockets, just because they satisfy this all-American macho movement. Every damn sport has to have some body contact these days. At least if it wants to have the privilege of being broadcasted and televised. Soon we're not going to have a snooker match on TV without the players viciously stabbing each other in the eyes with pool cues. Why all this thirst for violence? Because it adds excitement to the game? Listen, if watching other human beings do whatever they can to severely injure each other is really this appealing to you, I'm not sure if I am comfortable with you watching hockey anymore. In fact, I don't want you watching TV at all. Put down the remote and go ask for help before your victims do one day.

By the way, another quick note to the fans; perhaps it's time to ease up on the whole 'we are on the same side and together we hate the other group' mentality as well. You guys have to take it easy. It's just a bunch of grown men playing with a leather ball or rubber disk. It doesn't need to be taken *that* seriously. If you really feel the need to take something seriously, how about a job? Finishing that college degree, perhaps? I'm sure there are many things out there that can be productively taken seriously; you know, intellectually enriching activities that can perhaps one day give you the necessary cognitive abilities to refrain yourself from throwing a cup of beer at an angry 6'7, 250 pound behemoth, thereby saving yourself from an unnecessary ass-kicking.

As for all this 'let us defend our group and fight the others at all cost' so-called *team spirit* among players and fans – should we really be manufacturing more of these artificial feelings of loyalty and hatred? Do we honestly need to put so much effort into creating more differences between beer-drinking, wrestling-watching North American men? This can't be good if you ask me.

In fact, I think I saw a documentary about something like that once, this whole production of in-group loyalty and out-group hatred phenomenon. I am not exactly sure, though. I had some trouble understanding what was going on. There was simply too much noise and cheering in the background; besides, the guy with the moustache was speaking only in German.



Ron Artest fights with fans in the stands

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Supremely Liberating

Associate Editor Stephen Hutchison reports on the Supreme Court's opinion on same-sex marriage

On Thursday, December 9, 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered an opinion in response to 4 questions asked of it by the federal government. The Court's opinion - which was unanimous - seems to have been a victory, if an incomplete one, on the part of same-sex marriages. It moves Canada closer to the adoption of legalized same-sex marriage, but does not ensure their adoption nationally. The Court was asked 4 questions by the government:

1. According to the *Constitution Act, 1867*, which level of government has the power to define marriage? To this the Court replied that the power to define marriage rested solely with the federal Parliament. This undercuts the province of Alberta, which had stated that it would use the notwithstanding clause to protect its own separate definition of marriage. The notwithstanding clause cannot, of course, be used to override the federal-provincial distribution of powers. The government of Alberta seemed quite chastened when faced with this aspect of the decision; the Attorney-General of Alberta acknowledged that the use of the notwithstanding clause would be pointless, and that Alberta was left with few legal recourses to prevent same-sex marriage.

2. Is same-sex marriage compatible with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? In response, the Court indicated that it is compatible. This was universally expected, particularly considering the lower court decisions.

3. Can churches and other religious institutions be legally forced to marry same-sex couples? The Court answered that the religious freedom provisions of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* legally prevent churches from being forced to marry anyone whom they do not wish to marry. As opponents of same-sex marriage have frequently trotted out "religious freedom", this aspect of the opinion may assuage such criticisms.

4. Is the current definition of marriage unconstitutional? While the Chretien government had asked the first 3 questions, the Martin government added this fourth one. Martin had apparently hoped that the Court would rule that it was unconstitutional, thereby allowing him to claim that, in legalizing same-sex marriage, his hand had been forced by the Court. Demonstrating its unwillingness to be used as a political tool, however, the Court refused to answer this question. The possibility is therefore left open that Parliament *might* be able to define marriage in a traditional manner and have that definition remain legal; there is an equal possibility, however, that such a definition *might* be ultimately struck down (the above answer indicates, however, that a definition that includes gay marriage would *not* be struck down). The issue wasn't addressed. The Court noted, however, that "Several centuries ago, it would have been understood that marriage be available only to opposite-sex couples. The recognition of same-sex marriage in several Canadian jurisdictions as well as two European countries belies the assertion that the same is true today." This would seem to be a fairly

clear endorsement of same-sex marriage by the Court.

Immediately following the release of the opinion, Martin announced that, as early as January 2005, he would initiate legislation to legalize same-sex marriage nationally. "We are proceeding," Martin explained, "because quite simply we believe in the Charter of Rights and the guarantee it provides to equality." This is a pleasing reversal from a man who once said that he endorsed the traditional definition of marriage. It has become fairly clear that the leading figure supporting

the rights of minorities, the protection of religious freedoms." Perhaps fittingly, Coder represents the constituency once represented by Pierre Trudeau.

Most observers believe that the legislation will pass fairly easily. The Prime Minister has indicated that the government will be expected to stand united on this issue, meaning that all cabinet ministers will need to either support the legislation or resign. Internal polling of MPs by the Liberal Party indicates that the opposition could garner, at most, 142

votes: somewhat less than needed to prevent the legislation's passage. The Liberal polling suggests that the legislation will pass by a margin of approximately 25 votes.

The options available to opponents of same-sex marriage seem to have become very limited indeed. In an article published in the *Globe and Mail* a week after the release of the opinion, Peter Hogg, the former Dean of Osgoode Hall Law School and a constitutional scholar, argues that the only method by which same-sex marriage could now be prevented is the invocation of the

controversial notwithstanding clause of the *Charter* by the federal Parliament. While Conservatives have suggested creating "civil unions" as a compromise between the traditional and new definitions of marriage, Hogg indicates that the Supreme Court has assigned power over "civil unions" to the provinces, thereby preventing the federal government from legislating such an option. Moreover, Hogg reminds his readers, the Superior Court of Quebec has already ruled "civil unions" to be less than equal and therefore unconstitutional. Conservative critics have also argued that Parliament could ban same-sex marriages without invoking the notwithstanding clause, but Hogg suggests that such an action would almost assuredly fail under legal challenges. In a revealing debate between Scott Reid and Geoff Norquay, the communication directors for Paul Martin and Stephen Harper, respectively, on CBC's *Politics*, Reid offered Norquay \$100 if he could name a single legal scholar who supported the Conservative positions. Suffice it to say that Norquay did not receive a single penny.

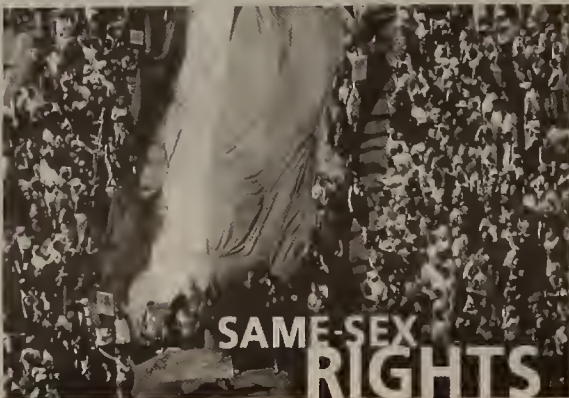


Photo: Saul Porto, cbc.ca

same-sex marriage within the government is Irwin Coder, the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of Canada. While former Justice Minister Martin Cauchon was somewhat ambivalent towards the idea (he initially opposed same-sex marriage to the Ontario Court of Appeals), Coder seems determinedly committed. In an interview with the *Toronto Star* before the release of the Court's opinion, he pledged to initiate legislation by January. When asked in the House of Commons whether he would recognize same-sex marriages, Coder replied simply: "Mr. Speaker, the answer in one word is yes."

Following the release of the Supreme Court's opinion, Coder passionately reiterated his commitment to legalizing same-sex marriages, proclaiming that, "It's a question of the protection of fundamental principles in the Charter of Rights. It's not just a question of gay and lesbian rights. Yes, that's important. But there are principles here that are more fundamental, like the protection of the principle of equality, the protection of human dignity, the protection of

A Modest Proposal

Joshua Pineda envisions the future of marketing

During November, as per usual, Christmas decorations began to sprig up. Most stores didn't even give the usual two week grace period after Halloween (i.e. until after Remembrance day) before celebrating the beginning of the festive season. In fact the entire last financial quarter of the year is a perpetual holiday, divided between the "big four" holidays of the year (Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, New Year's). But what are we to do for the four months between January and the summer when we can start making up holidays to celebrate (i.e. Victoria Day, Canada Day, Stat Holiday)? What will businesses do to get shoppers in the mall between January and May?

Well, if I can make a modest proposal, the obvious solution is ... a second Christmas. With the financial returns from Valentine's day

diminishing every year, the addition of another holiday would allow businesses to carry the financial momentum from Christmas (which will be referred to as Christmas Classic from now on) into the second financial quarter. As we've learned through the Valentine's Day experiment, invented holidays lose their cultural purchase as their authenticity begins to be questioned over time; a second Christmas would carry the name-brand legitimacy of the Christmas Classic. In addition, Christmas II, or Xmas II as I prefer (the anti-commercial beliefs of Christ outweigh the financial possibilities of tapping into the Christian demographic offered by the explicit mention of "Chrnsr" in the holiday's name) would provide new employment opportunities for shopping mall Santas and elves, as well as giving an additional financial push to manufacturers and purveyors of Christmas Classic oriented

items such as nativity scenes, Christmas lights and trees, eggnog, Santa suits, reindeer toys, crucifixes, etc.

Xmas II would ideally be situated in Easter's calendar slot. Green and Magenta would be Xmas II's official colours (apparently both are very "hot" amongst the 18-29 demographic). These colours could be worked into the nativity myth of Jesus II with ease (perhaps he could be raised by a family of brightly coloured dinosaurs). Artists such as Nelly Furtado and DMX have already expressed interest in producing hip, multicultural Xmas II carols to celebrate the birth of Jesus II and his miraculous escape from the clutches of the hyper-mastodons. And then after the traditional Xmas II exchange of gifts the celebrants all sit around a table and eat the children of the Irish poor.

Brian Jonestown Massacre: Halloween 2004 David Marchese reviews a concert

On a night when everyone is invited to be something they're not, the Brian Jonestown Massacre raised some questions about the importance of identity in the image-

of Ondi Timoner's recent documentary *Dig!*, played music that seemed to float in a haze of half-familiar melodies and faintly recognizable motifs. One song sounded like the Byrds with Lou Reed singing, the next one was The Cure jamming with Spacemen 3. It might have been a legitimate gripe to say that the band seemed completely uninterested in coming up with a sound they could justifiably call their own. But something got in the way — they sounded great.

There was a sense of excitement inside the packed club that probably had something to do with the band's sudden notoriety as a documentary subject. *Dig!* portrays the BJM as a ramshackle bunch of ne'er do wells, led by their undisputed leader, the guitarist and singer Anton Newcombe. The film shows Newcombe, who has publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the film's depiction of him, as a drug-dependent egomaniac, unwillingly dedicated to sabotaging his chances at popular success. Even though the portrait is far from flattering, the film presents him and his band as an example of "authentic" rock and roll. Who knows how many broken dreams and pawnshop guitars are the result of the bullshit myth of rock and roll authenticity? The answer is probably not as high as the number of records that have been sold on the back of the same doomed romanticism.

There were undoubtedly many in the crowd hoping

for some kind of spectacular flameout or meltdown. These were the kind of people who like Fat Elvis more than Sun Elvis. A video store not too far from the club rents compila-

tion videos of rock stars freaking out in public. We all slow down to look at car wrecks. Unfortunately, for those among us looking to get off on schadenfreude, the good Anton showed up. He spoke humbly and good-naturedly to the crowd, honouring requests to tell stories and perform favourite songs. Now and then, subtle hints of instability would creep out; he seemed incapable of tuning his own guitar; he abruptly stopped on two or three occasions to tutor band members on their parts; he disappeared from the stage for a minute here and there.

But on the whole, he seemed far removed from the man who was reviewed as a model of instability.

Compared to the personality of their leader, the band's music is easy to get a read on. The rhythm guitarist in the cheesecloth shirt strummed rudimentary chords with just the right look of disaffection. The keyboards played the universe to the bands' stars, covering all the space with its drones. The bass player, a babyface under a Brit-coif, must have listened a lot more closely to Bill Wyman than the rest of us ever did. The lead guitarist excelled at fulfilling the requirements of his particular job: frenetic movement and excessive sweating. The drummer spent the whole night looking as if he was deathly afraid of messing up. Newcombe stood stage left, strumming and singing, rarely moving as he played, positioned with one eye on the crowd and one eye on the band. Together they made a sound that came pretty close to bliss.

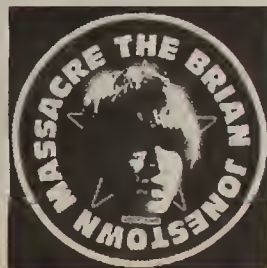
Even if he's essentially a musical mimic, adapting the work of those more visionary and talented than himself,

Newcombe and his shambolic cohorts performed a valuable service. For 12 bucks, you got two hours of musical make-believe. Close your eyes and it's San Francisco in 1967; blink and you're in a dank basement in post-punk London. Blink again and it's happening right here, right now: guitars cascading and shimmering around each other, an organ droning in the background, the rhythm section thumping and vrooming. Add a skinny white boy singing over top, and you have something that will sound just as great in the future as it does in the present, and did in the past.

The band's most recent studio album was called *Tomorrow's Heroes Today*. On this night they more closely resembled the heroes of yesterday. Maybe the Anton Newcombe I saw was an aberration, a bad man on a good night. Maybe he is the screw-up from *Dig!* But on Halloween, when Little Richard danced across the room from Jacques Cousteau, and the corpse of Kennedy drank with the Devil,

no one got any strikes against them for putting on a costume. The Brian Jonestown Massacre wore a lot of musical costumes, but they were all a good fit. It's when the music stops that Anton Newcombe seems unsure of who he is, or who he's supposed to be. Minutes after the show ended, with

the feedback still fresh, I saw Newcombe hustling down a dark alley, alone, with his hands pushed deep into the pockets of his coat and his shoulders hunched up around his ears. Somehow it was the most real moment of the night.



The O.C. Update Things, Francis Bourqui explains, get complicated in Orange County

I finally saw an episode of the O.C. a few weeks ago, after a too long hiatus. I caught most of the episodes from the first season during summer re-runs. It instantly took me back to the yonder days of 90210 and I thoroughly enjoyed what was happening in Orange County. Sometimes I even dream of visiting the land of beautiful girls and warm weather transmitted to me by my TV every week.

For those of you who don't know the premise or what's been going on (shame on you), I offer my incomplete synopsis of the show so far. The story starts with Ryan, a bad kid from an even worse neighborhood (Chino) moves in with the Cohen family in the plush Newport Beach area. The series follows the wacky adventures and tribulations of a group of teenagers as they go through high school life. The main characters are Seth, Ryan, Marissa and Summer. Seth is Ryan's friend and the guy who Ryan moves in with. He's kind of a dork, but so am I, so I can relate with the guy. Seth finds himself in some love triangle with Summer and a girl named Anna (both very yummy) and ends up with

Summer, who is a spoiled little rich girl with no real problems. Seth ends up leaving her at the end of the first season for Tahiti. Ryan also has some luck in his romantic endeavors, as he ends up with the very delicious Marissa, a beautiful alcoholic prom queen type. Unfortunately, at the end of the season, they break-up when Ryan's ex-girlfriend returns, pregnant and claiming that the baby is Ryan's. He does the "right thing" and leaves Newport Beach to be a good dad.

The new season started in this fall, but I've been unable to watch since it airs on Thursday night at 8 pm when I am at kung-fu. Often I'd lie in bed late Thursday nights and wonder what happenings were transpiring in the lives of my TV friends. I thought I would never know, until one Thursday I was flipping through the massive amounts of channels on digital cable (just recently hooked up in my household), when with joy unbound I discovered that the O.C. was replayed at 11 pm.

This episode was pretty good. I really have no idea what's been happening up until this point, but this is what happened on the episode I saw. Seth is in love with his really sexy boss/co-worker and she proceeds to tease and lead him on, causing Seth no amount of frustration and grief. Summer, on the other hand, nicely recovering it seems from Seth's

abandonment at the end of the first season, is trying to hook up with some random guy whom I am even handsomer than. I predict it won't last long. Marissa is continuing her clandestine relationship with the working class (below her)

and sexy gardener named Diego (I think). She defies her mother by bringing him to some Newport Beach social dance thing, once again proving that this rich girl has more than a little rebelliousness in her. Finally Ryan, who seems to have left his pregnant ex-girlfriend (reasons unknown), has returned to the O.C. (wouldn't have been the same without you buddy). During this episode he wins over his lab partner, a good looking brainiac type who plays hard to get at the start. As a final twist, it is revealed that she is the illegitimate love child of Seth's grandfather. High drama I tell thee!

Now that I know when I can catch the O.C., I will once again be watching faithfully and recommend that you do the same. The characters are interesting and it's pretty well written. I mean, check out my pick for best line of the episode: "She can't fall for you if you're not there to catch her."



Goddam Catchy Mississauga Erin Rodgers reviews *Mississauga Goddam* by The Hidden Cameras

Doot, doot, doot...oh crap it's happening again. While this album is unbelievably catchy it will be filed in my "don't sing along on the bus" file. It is charming, fun, clever and d-irty. In fact it is so charming, fun and clever that it manages to slip by you that the entire song is about an enema or, say in my case, that you're happily singing and dancing to a song about golden showers with your headphones on not realizing that a) there are other people in the house b) that you are singing both loud and off-key about a subject people rarely sing about (and if they do, it tends to be better performed than by your's truly), and c) that those aforementioned people are guffawing so hard that their asses have not only been laughed off, but are making a mad dash for the door.

That being said, the only negative thing I have to say about this album is that it IS an album. The Hidden Cameras are so fantastic live, that there is no way a simple album can capture the fun that is go-go dancers, masked men, lyrics on bed sheets, and an entire crowd dancing. This was my experience when I saw a Hidden Cameras show this summer. It took place at Harbourfront and was punctuated by bouts of rain, yet still proved itself to be one of the most fun and memorable shows I have ever been to.

So get the album, learn the words and get your self in dancing shape (preferably when your roommates are not home). You'll need both skills for the next Hidden Cameras show I'll see you there.



Hot Water Music show review/interview A new album, a new energy, writes Francis Bourqui

Hot Water Music is one of those perennial punk bands constantly touring and playing music for their many fans around the globe. Together since the mid-1990's, the Gainesville, Florida four-piece came to the attention of a multitude of listeners with the 2001 release of *A Flight* and a *Crash* on epitaph records in 2001. During the fall, the band embarked on a North American tour to promote their newest album *The New What Next*. Guitarist/vocalist Chuck Ragin explains how the grammatically incorrect album title came about: "Chris (Wollard, vocals/guitar) had a little journal and that was the title of it.

The reason it struck us as being something unique or different. What affected the whole energy of the album was the fact that it was something brand new, something we've never done, some sources that we'd never tapped before. It just seemed right, and for us, whenever we're recording or writing music, we never know what's going to happen; hence the whole idea of 'what's new, what's next?' Although I haven't heard the new album in its entirety, the songs I have heard show a new maturity in the band's music and a tightening in structure and vocals. HWM's music has been described as alternative, punk, rock and even

emo, though personally I would call it more punk inspired rock music. Yet I believe that their ever-changing sound and the inability to tightly pigeon-hole their music is something

they strive for. "We're always trying to progress and find new sounds, we don't want to be the same band we are today, tomorrow." It is this desire that ensures the longevity of a band and inspires them to play their best at every show.

That night, Hot Water Music played with the intensity they are well known for. Despite lackluster performances by the opening bands



Planes Mistaken for Stars and Silverstein, Hot Water Music played with their greatest asset: "Energy. I would think about anything else, because sometimes we may sound and play like shit, we still have lots of energy." It was certainly the case that night as the crowd and the mood picked up immensely when Hot Water Music hit the stage. Playing a healthy mix of older songs and newer ones, the band fed off the energy of the crowd and vice-versa. The band managed to pull this off at a less than full Opera House on a Tuesday night, which is saying a lot. It was a pretty good show, though the crappiness of the opening bands prevented it from being a great show, and it really sucks when that happens.

Legitimate Theatre in only 200 Words Leonard Elias can review plays in only 200 words. Can you?

200 word reviews. 200 words: no more, no less, no BS. Enjoy these small slices of local theatre that YOU CAN SEE TOO! I'll keep you updated on what's up on the U of T and professional theatre scenes.

Macbeth by William Shakespeare at Trinity College Drama Society

2/5
Directed by: Ted Witzel

Trinity's production of *Macbeth* proved that an amazing performance by a lead actor couldn't save a production riddled with ambiguous directorial choices and amateur acting.

The show was set in a post-WW1 world, which potentially could have been an interesting idea. The program spoke of the anxiety of the time, the liberation of women and political instability that permeate the '20s, while the production expressed the themes merely as a smorgasbord of twenties costumes, female nymphomaniacs and a single black and white film narcissistically featuring the director. Also, since when is techno from the '20s?

The acting was a curious mix of training and otherwise. King Macbeth, played by Alistair Scott, carried the show through thick and thin by delivering a potent and truly expressive performance. Opposing that, his counterpart, Lady Macbeth played by Heather Hull, failed to understand the intricacies of The Lady. John Wood's portrayal of Banquo was haughty and boring, and I ask: since when were there 2004 earrings in the '20s?

The Three Witches showed expression and devotion despite the awkward directorial choices (nymphomania). Meanwhile, Rouzbeh Fard, playing both Duncan and First Murderer, brought life to the otherwise dead stage with

his impressive character work.

Cul-De-Sac by Daniel MacIvor at Buddies In Bad Times Theatre

5/5
Directed by: Daniel Brooks

If you have not seen and or heard of Daniel MacIvor, you are missing one of the most crucial writers and performers of Canadian theatre.

Cul-De-Sac is a one-man masterpiece featuring Daniel MacIvor playing Leonard, a man leading the audience through his last moments on Earth. MacIvor weaves his way in and out of nine characters with such skill and ease that lines, which must have been meticulously rehearsed for weeks, appear improvised.

If the acting and directing were not phenomenal, the production and lighting alone would have made this play extraordinary. Mirroring the "in-your-face" acting that made MacIvor famous, lights were hung directly in the audience's faces yielding an invasive effect that made the play even more effective. The cues were so fantastically executed that a spoken word on stage shifted into a recorded sound so perfectly eerie to send a shiver down the spine.

Leonard is a homosexual man dying in his cul-de-sac neighborhood. The play takes us in and out of other houses as the inhabitants, each eccentric in their own way, recounts the stories of how they heard Leonard's final moan.

The play is laced with subtle wit and intelligence that makes MacIvor's work so extraordinary.

Othello by William Shakespeare at Hart House Theatre

4/5
Directed by: Jeremy Hutton

Jeremy Hutton has directed a visually stunning and intellectually engaging version of *Othello*. His perception of the play occurs in the late 19th century using the advent of the photograph to supply his theme. Employing towering sheets of fabric and bright light, Hutton takes moments to flash the lights creating snapshots of the play. Most notably, Hutton interprets the asides and soliloquies as cut out moments from photographs where actors move as freely as their thoughts in a frozen space.

Throughout the play, the juxtaposition of black and white brings out a great theme of the play. Nevertheless, Hutton keeps the action alive by utilizing expressive colours to express Othello's inner passion in a Black and White world.

Sadly, the three leading actors damaged the superb concept of the play. Desdemona's (Sarah Swift) acting was unconnected and shrill and Othello (André Sills) mixed his work with moments of sincere drama to excessive melodrama. Iago (William Foley), one of the most enthralling characters of Shakespeare's stage, reduced the brooding evil wit of Iago to a clown-like energy that lacked the love of his manipulation.

Hutton, while being a phenomenal stage designer, did not seem to fashion his actors to his vision.

Social Distortion and Tiger Army

According to Frantastico, Rock n' Roll still has some soul

I have to say that this is one concert to which I looked forward very much. I bought the ticket over a month in advance, had the date marked on my calendar and I picked out my evening's wardrobe the night in advance. I have been a huge fan of Social Distortion for a long time and there are not many bands that I love that I have not seen live (except for Sublime-RIP). I ended up attending with a tight-knit crew of my friends from my hometown, so once we got there, you know we'd get our drink on. I was pleasantly surprised when we arrived in line and wristbands were in effect. This meant that we could wander around the Kool Haus with our drinks and not be confined to a small and slightly to the side drinking section. As I wandered in and took a long look around, I noticed something odd about the crowd; they all looked older and dignified. There were no kids with over done Mohawks and stupid talk, and older women are much more seductive than teenage girls who try too hard. It was beautiful; I truly felt I was among peers who had respect for the bands and music they were about to hear. It put me in a great mood.



Tiger Army

It was like being in a secret club. As I walked towards the bar to grab my first drink of the evening, the opening band, The Explosion, were on stage warming up the crowd nicely.

Unfortunately, the crowd was sparse at this time so most people missed out on a very decent band. Tiger Army was set to play next and so my friends and I approached the stage as they took to the stage. Although I had not heard much from these guys, this three piece band from California had impressed me with the music I did hear. Tiger Army did not disappoint as they played an energetic set of rocka/psychobilly punk rock. Even though the sound is not new, the band puts an interesting spin on it and just plays it so well. I mean, the bassist was playing a stand up; you know a band is going to blow your mind when a stand up bass is involved. As an opening band, Tiger Army did a good job, as I was just going nuts as Social Distortion prepared to come on (and as I got drunker). Social Distortion may have been around for about 20 year, but they haven't slowed down one bit. Mike Ness has got one of the best

voices in music today and I recommend checking out his solo stuff if you haven't done so already. He sings about life and holds nothing back. When you listen to this guy, you can feel the emotions; it's just so bloody honest and true. It's an incredible feeling and I had it non-stop for about 1 hour on a random Monday evening. Playing such classics as "Ball and Chain" and "Story of my Life," the evening was one giant sing-along. The only one who seemed like he wasn't having much fun was Matt Freeman of Rancid, who was filling in on bass, but screw him. I enjoyed myself more than I can remember in a long time, as did a Kool Haus packed with 19+ Social D fans who witnessed true Rock n' Roll.



Social Distortion

What's myth got to do with it?

Cassandra Drudi on Modigliani at the AGO

By naming an exhibit "Modigliani: Beyond the Myth," the curatorial powers that be make some pretty big claims. Firstly, that there is much mythologizing surrounding the work and life of twentieth-century Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani, and secondly, that this one exhibit will cut through the myth to show the man, as he was. Understandably, a title like this also raises some expectations on the part of the viewing public. Like, what is all this myth? And what will we see once it's been cleared out of the way?

Unfortunately, these answers are not to be found at the AGO's Modigliani exhibit. The brief synopses of the various aspects of his life that accompany the artwork are just that, brief. They tease you into thinking that something deeply profound and revealing is on its way, and then, the paragraph is finished, all sentences finally punctuated. Any mention of his wildchild days in the bohemian Montparnasse district of Paris are thrown in casually and offhand, as if it's common knowledge that his lover, Jeanne Hébuterne (at eight months pregnant) killed herself two days

after Modigliani himself succumbed to tubercular meningitis. She may have met a tragic end, but notice instead the lovely portraits of her by the artist, completed in days of relative bliss.

Luckily, there is more to this exhibition than shallow synopses of a man's life. Modigliani's work is quite distinctive — he worked primarily in portraits at a time when they were deemed unfashionable by the art set, and the elongation of necks and noses (influenced by African and Asian art) makes his work immediately recognizable. Although all of the portraits display his characteristic elongation, each face has one feature that, exaggerated, sets it apart from the others: the Italian woman (in a portrait of the same name) has an expression of intense irritation on her face that distinguishes her from Beatrice Hastings (another lover of Modigliani's) who is rendered almost birdlike with pursed lips and pointed features, despite the presence in both works of a similar basic shape.

Modigliani is also known for his nudes, and for the frank way in which they presented female sexuality at a time when such ideas were essentially taboo. Unfortunately, though the history of his work in this genre is extensively described —

he painted 30 nudes during a brief period of productivity from 1916-17 and mounted a solo exhibition of them that was shut down by the police within hours for its "obscenity" — only four of them are included.

Also included in the exhibit are several sculptures. It had been Modigliani's goal from an early age to become a sculptor, and he managed to complete 25 pieces in 5 years before abandoning limestone for oil paint. The similarities between his portraits and sculptures are quite striking, and in the context of stone, the eastern influences in his work clearly visible, as the pieces seem more refined versions of the heads of Easter Island.

The only element that even begins to reveal the man behind the alleged myth are the numerous sketches from Modigliani's early days. Completed on inexpensive sketch paper, covers of old sketchbooks and the pages of lined notebooks, they reveal moments of creativity that the artist never intended people to see: we see his visual thought processes at work, and can connect them with the paintings on display in subsequent rooms of the exhibit.

"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth" runs at the AGO to January 23, 2005. Information about exhibit hours and ticket prices can be found at www.ago.net.



Modigliani *Blue Eyes*, 1884-1920



Modigliani *Reclining Nude From the Back*, 1917

hope

By Jennifer Charles

In a rain gutter,
High above the grief and grime,
Grass grows unnoticed.



Summer

By Alex Rotstein

Green grass
Leaden days dripping slowly down the gutter into the
Drain past the sidewalks overflowing with
People and
Dead worms—squished against the pavement like a
Slide, like a sample like
My dinner last night,
A societal experiment, dried out transparent life
Life without substance,
Like condensed soup.

Water lies on the grass and it steams like vegetables
Sprinklers hiss and harass innocent
Pedestrians
But the children bask in the spray like it's
Salvation, like it's
Reality, like it's

New life.

As the old life lies stagnant in the forests of
Suburban Toronto
And the sun pretends it is still beautiful
But the air suffocates and the rain burns
And artifice is the new accepted
Truth

And all the pretty flowers are from places like the Amazon
But here they can only grow in gardens —
according to a contract —so that they can't quite
touch
beauty.

And the trees wilt like old celery and the grass grows too high and
needs to be cut back
And it's so green that it makes my eyes
Bleed
And it's so straight that it makes my feet sting

Because I'm too afraid to sit and enjoy the sunset
Because I might disturb the unstable

Perfection.

Untitled

By Emily Twiddy

She asked me to walk with her to union
“union” I said, “It's cold - that's ridiculous.”
So I took the underground train alone
And rode home in a warm metal carcass
listening to the screech of steel rails

strength

by Jennifer Charles

Winter approaches,
Breath curls like wispy dragons,
Bracing cold with tears.

waking up

By Emily Twiddy

floating again
on my own sleep thoughts
while fall comes,
knocking me down and kicking
me away from the sun
my inspiration returned
with the dark of winter

man on the street told me I'm beautiful
after I didn't buy his newspaper
way to make me feel guilty

How can he still smile,
Watching those grey faces downtown?

I smiled though
it must be cold
standing on the corner

Equilibrium

By Alex Rotstein

I am rushing constantly towards
Equilibrium
Towards congealed uniformity
My soul is rotting, like a tomato, so that you can see the inside
From the outside,
And yet it's not the same, not quite right
Not natural,

But I can't seem to stop it.
It's a law; it's proven
And I am not.

faith

By Jennifer Charles

On a wet park bench,
A man with nothing whispers
A prayer for sunrise.



Peleus

By Joshua Pineda

Haven't you always wanted to fuck the transcendent?
Holding fast to her, multi-form and various,
Adrift amidst her ocean's
Ebb & Flow
Her currents pulling you
Towards the epiphanic
Moment, the most intimate knowledge
Brief premonition of eternity that
Shatters all barriers (cynosure of her
& you) the realization that
In the end
All things are fluid

surrender

By Jennifer Charles

This rainy evening,
A wasp submits to slow death,
Between screen and glass.

Avril and That Guy on a Box

Kaitlin Bardswich analyses an Avril Lavigne concert

It really wasn't as bad as it sounds. Okay, okay – I know that many people have their own personal issues with Avril, so I'm not even going near those. I shall be completely objective (notice the use of the word "shall" to make me sound more intelligent and consequently more believable on the learned subject of Avril).

The concert took place on November 4, at the infamous Air Canada Centre (okay, so it's not really all that infamous, but I'm trying to sound sophisticated. Which is difficult considering I'm reviewing an Avril concert. Anyway...). The opening band was Not By Choice and the opener for the opening band consisted of two guys – one singing and playing the guitar, and the other sitting on top of a box, shaking some kind of maraca in one hand whilst (see – there's that sophisticated/intelligent thing again) banging a box like a makeshift drum. It was pretty good, actually.

And, I'll admit, Avril wasn't that awful. She sang songs from both of her albums – *Let Go* and *Under My Skin* – and I was impressed that she sang, strummed the guitar, played the piano, and took a shot at the drums for an encore song (and no, before you scratch your head in wonder, she did not do all four simultaneously). Although her whole believe-in-yourself-and-your-dreams-really-can-come-true proselitizing to the audience did grate on my nerves.

But, onto the exciting part of this article: a list. Here's a list of the people you (yes – YOU) will find at an Avril concert:

1) Pre-teens: The ages range from five years right up to twelve (and a few even older – see category 5). You can find them either crushed against the security barricade at the front of the stage or at the back, standing on their tiptoes trying to see anything, stuck there because they're too young to know how to body surf to the front. And no, there's no in-between.



2) Moms of Pre-Teens: These can be found, naturally, around their own offspring, bobbing their heads to the music and avoiding eye contact with the dads of pre-teens (see category 3). Later, on the subway ride home, they can be heard talking to each other about how they couldn't stand Not By Choice because they were too "loud", but they loved Avril's positive image and hoped she won't become like Britney.

3) Dads of Pre-Teens: These are usually single dads, scoping out the moms to see if they have a chance with any of them. Whether or not the moms are single doesn't seem to be an issue.

4) Crazy Old Women: Well, there was only one crazy old woman I saw. And she wasn't really old – probably 50-60ish. But she was crazy. There were a few people pushing (but what can you expect – we were in the mosh pit area, though a mosh pit never actually formed) so she took this as an opportunity to incite even more of this

annoying action by violently ramming herself into other people, pushing them in the opposite direction of the stage. I was afraid there would be some West Side Story-like fight, with all the Moms and their pre-teen offspring facing off against the crazy concert lady. It would've been interesting, though, since it would have been a pretty fair fight.

5) Everyone Else: This includes guys whose girlfriends dragged them there (and some guys who went by their own free will, but that would take a whole other article to delve into), older girls who actually enjoy Avril's music on account that she writes and plays her own music (this would include the best friend who dragged me to see Avril in the first place), and older girls who still act like pre-teens. Oh, and reporters comme moi.

But really, nothing beats the guy on a box.

I came. I saw. I pondered. Kaitlin Bardswich reviews INKcrossfade²AIR

I'm not exactly a fan of interpretive dance. To be truthful, I don't think I've ever been to an interpretive dance performance before. So, why did I decide to review the interpretive dance show entitled INKcrossfade²AIR? Well, it was free. But other than the "starving student" motive, I went because I was interested.

Who knew what I might discover? Hell, I might even like it.

And then it began. I could use words to describe the show such as "interesting", "thought-provoking", and "different", but that may imply that it was bad. And it wasn't bad. At least, I don't know that it was bad. So, since most of us don't have a lot of background knowledge when it comes to interpretive dance, perhaps it's good that I, an average journalist, am reviewing it for you, the average consumer.

Okay, so let's get through some of the "who-what-when-where-why-etc" ... well, the "why" is fairly subjective. Anyway, the show took place from December 9th to 11th, 2004, at the Winchester Street Theatre. It was a DanceWorks CoWorks Series Event, consisting of three parts entitled INK, crossfade², and AIR.

For me, the show's intermission had a great deal of meaning. It divided the show into what I thought was, to be frank, fairly boring, and what was exceptionally well done. The first half of the show was called INK. Choreographer Andrea Nann collaborated with dancers Alison Denham and Kate Holden, along with video designer Samm Higginson. A large component of this performance involved the work of Western Canada's artist, Wayne Ngan, whose Chinese ink paintings, as well as his monologues about the art of dance, decorated the performance.

All in all, it was good, and I certainly admired the creativity that went into it – the video in the background, coupled with Ngan's words and the graceful movements of Denham, Holden, and Nann, made for a very original, reflective story. But for me, the music was a bit too slow, the movements a bit too slow; everything seemed a bit too slow... so, after a while, I frankly was bored. This may not be a reflection of the performers, but perhaps a reflection on me.

The point is that I wasn't entertained. And, okay, maybe the goal wasn't to be entertained, but rather moved by the artistic merit. And there was artistic merit, but still. Okay... moving on...

The second half is what really made the show, especially the second part of the second half (do you follow?). The second half consisted of two separate works – crossfade² and AIR. Both were choreographed and performed by Lydia Wagerer. Wagerer has an incredible amount of emotion when she performs, emotion that is clearly visible to the audience. I enjoyed watching her. She has presence.

She also has range. At times, she could almost move you to tears, at other times, she had you laughing out loud. This laughter was especially found in AIR. Here,

Wagerer dressed as an obnoxious teenager pathetically trying to seduce. This could have been funny in itself, but what made it even more amusing? The fact is that Wagerer is very pregnant. So, when those in the audience saw her come out, her belly bare, with a tiny tank top and Juicy Couture-like pants, they started chuckling immediately. Wagerer's performance just enhanced this amusement. She became her character, and using interaction with the audience, AIR was the best part of the entire show.



Princess Productions, from danceontario.ca

A Final Farewell to Elliott Smith: Review of *From a Basement on the Hill* Qing Hua Wang reviews Elliott Smith's posthumous final album which raises some unanswerable questions.

Let's just get a few things out of the way before getting into the review. Yes, Elliott Smith committed suicide last October. No, we weren't exactly surprised considering the melancholy strums and laden lyrics on his previous five albums. But the death still sent his fans reeling and mourning. So with the posthumous release of his final album *From a Basement on the Hill*—which he was working on at the time of his death—fans and critics were eager to speculate over the level and nature of the artist's intent conveyed in the album. Was this the sound that Smith intended? How much of the album is from his decisions and how much from his family members, who were left with the task of completing and mixing the album? Can any of the lyrics be parsed for hidden meanings and clues to Smith's state of mind?

I don't know the answers to any of those questions, and because it's impossible to ever know for certain what Smith was thinking, there's no point in letting conjecture and supposition get in the way of actually enjoying and evaluating this album on its inherent merits. At the same time though, it's very tempting to take *From a Basement* as some kind of message from the beyond or a suicide note of sorts. Taking the context of this album into consideration when listening

to it certainly won't make it any less interesting. I'll leave that up to you though.

Now that that's out of the way, let's get to actually talking about the songs. The album opener, "Coast to Coast", starts with some slightly ominous strains that eventually yield to a surprisingly energetic guitar riff and powerful vocals. On the next track, "Let's Get Lost", Smith's voice regains its usual soft timbre amidst some delicately plucked guitars as he sings



about "burning every bridge that I cross / to find some beautiful place to get lost."

"Shooting Star" is a highlight from the second half of the album, filled with clanging cymbals and grating guitars. There is an almost wistful tone to the emotional contortions that, combined with the spirited accompaniment

and "ooh-ooh-ooh woo"s, gives the impression of Smith actually reveling in certain miseries.

"Memory Lane" is another example of Smith's distinctive talent for crafting catchy, tuneful songs with ominous lyrics. An innocent-sounding guitar lilt a soft, almost-twee melody while Smith sings about "the place you'll end up when you lose the chase / where you're dragged against your will".

The album closer, "A Distorted Reality Is Now a Necessity to be Free", is a classic example of the pitfalls of trying to interpret Smith's lyrics. The track title, combined with the lines "It's so disappointing / first I'll put it all down to luck / God knows why my / country don't give a fuck", would almost seem to suggest some anti-war sentiment. But then "I'm floating in a black balloon / Q.D. on Easter afternoon" and "Fit poorly and arrange the sight / Doll it up in virgin white" bring us back to the perennial drug themes.

From a Basement is our last chance to glimpse the mind of one of the most affecting songwriters of our generation. It isn't a stunningly brilliant final opus, but its unexpectedly upbeat refrains—in spite of the gloomy words—make it a fitting send-off.

Anti-uniform behavior--We're back!

After a semester-long hiatus, your favourite fashion scouts are back in action. We decided for this issue to keep in mind suggestions from our readers. Our subscribers were disappointed in our lack of fashion variation claiming that we only showcased one type of deviation from the norm. In this issue we attempt to bring you a more diverse look at UofT student body fashion—since out of a school of 50, 000 we should be able to find at least a few fashionistas. We bring you:



Name: Moose
Program: Ecosystem Management
Year: 2
How would you describe your style?: radical activist youth style mixed with smooth lines
Store: Toys 4 U
Mantra: Do unto others as you would other do unto you; suck it
Plans for the Future: 1. become the king of break-dance; 2. trying to get into more places masquerading as a UofT student

Name: Ryan Lavalley
Program: joint law-MBA
Year: 3 (of 4)
How would you describe your style?:

Stores: personal designer friends; Dolce & Gabbana
Plans for the Future [mantra]: Make More Money



Name: Jamie [hot librarian]
Program: History
Year: 5 in Ph.D.
Stores: Salvation Army; Jacob
Plans for the Future: Finish dissertation



Name(s): Luca and Lorenzo
Program: Engineering [but found at St. Mikes—who knew?]
Year: 2

Style: Lorenzo: "pick whatever... depends on the situation"
Stores: Grafic [the c is backwards—in Woodbridge]; Over the Rainbow; Denim 101 [also in Woodbridge]
Plans for the Future: Do well in school, make some money, open up a nightclub in Mexico for house music.



Name: David "Mensch" Cowan
Program: English specialist
Year: 5
Style Description: arc/tic texture
Store: Church sale; H&M;
your mother
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Plans for the Future:

Sideways Right Side Up

David Marchese reviews *Sideways* in which Alexander Payne explores humanity's capacity for dealing with failure



Thoreau wrote that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." He was describing the way that people attempt to mask their despair by delighting in the "games and amusements of mankind." Following a life of quiet desperation rather than leading one, would be an apt description of Miles Raymond, the central figure in Alexander Payne's *Sideways*. As played by Paul Giamatti, Miles seems emotionally incapable of leading anything, let alone his own life. The only refuge he is able to take from his growing sense of insignificance is in his love of wine. Miles is one of those people who develop a mastery of a particular subject in order to feel some sense of accomplishment. He may be a failure as a writer and husband, but Miles damn well knows the difference between a Pinot Grigio and a Gewurztraminer.

The story centres on a week-long trip into California's wine country that Miles has organized for his soon-to-be married best friend Jack. The low-key goodbye to bachelorhood is supposed to involve the placid pleasures of wine-tasting and golf, but Jack, a failed actor, is resolutely determined to use the last days before his wedding as a final opportunity to sow his wild oats. The film really begins when Jack and Miles, as a result of Jack's relentless prodding, meet the two women, played by Sandra Oh and Virginia Madsen, who elucidate the true nature of the two men. Jack is a relentless philanderer, primarily interested in his immediate gratification. Miles, so used to disappointment, is looking not to get hurt. They act accordingly - humorously and heartbreakingly.

Sideways is a beautiful film about facing up to the reality of life. Intelligently written, beautifully shot, and heartbreakingly well acted, if you have some sense of what it's like to hit rock-bottom, and the courage it takes to get back up, then you owe it to yourself to see this movie.

Trench Fantasies

Jeunet takes a huge risk with *A Very Long Engagement* that ultimately proves his worth as a contemporary master

Jean-Pierre Jeunet's last film, the massively influential and successful *Amélie*, was quite literally about little, trivial things. I don't mean this as a point of indignation; the film both satirized and praised the arbitrary facets of life which construct identity and obsession. Still, you have to wonder how a director makes the colossal leap to epic war romance for his next film without even changing his lead actress. So what's Jeunet trying to do? Is he simply flexing his authorial muscles for his fourth feature? Testing the malleability of Audrey Tautou's charismatic presence? Does he think war is funny? Whatever it is, *A Very Long Engagement* is both a radical departure, and the logical next step of Jeunet's career.



The film takes place during World War I, where Tautou stars as a crippled girl from the French countryside who refuses to believe her fiancé, sent to the trenches, has been killed. In a horrifying flashback, she is told by a returned veteran that her betrothed, along with five other soldiers, have been court-martialed and sent into No Man's Land. For those unfamiliar with WWI terminology, this is the little patch of mud in between the trenches of opposing armies. This is probably the most affecting scene; the bitter irony of soldiers trying to wound themselves to get sent home, who instead get sent even closer to their death on a count of "self-mutilation". The ownership of someone's own body by an external force, whether a lover or a country, is constantly inverted by the young woman's belief that she can save him by sheer force of her own willpower. Jeunet draws the line between brutal physicality and mental bliss, or the realm of the imagination.

The uninitiated to Jeunet's particular style will immediately notice that there isn't a lot of political subtext to this film, the subjects being more willpower, imagination and chaos. The film works with the uncertainty inherent behind its premise, and floods it in the realm of possibilities. The tradeoff for Jeunet's uncompromised ephemeral approach to his subjects is that the viewer doesn't have a whole lot of emotional investment in the characters. Not to say that it isn't emotional — it's in fact heartbreaking at moments — but the emotion is rooted more in the landscape and composition than the characters. There's nothing wrong with this necessarily; Jeunet knows that cinema is inherently artificial, and as a pure cinematic achievement, *A Very Long Engagement* is masterful.

The Motorcycle Diaries

Matthew Marshall discovers that before he became a revolutionary, Che Guevara was just another young guy on a road trip

The Motorcycle Diaries details the journey across South America by Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, later known as Che Guevara, and his best friend Alberto Granado. They leave their comfortable lives in Argentina by motorcycle across South America. On the way they encounter many of the sad aspects of South American life at this time. As they are propelled from their middle class upbringings and exposed to the injustices so prevalent on the journey, Ernesto undergoes a subtle and gradual change in outlook, from an activist to the beginnings of a revolutionary. But there is still only the faintest hint of what he will become: an iconic figure of revolutionary struggle. As a young man taking a road trip with his friend, like so many other young people who leave their homes to see the world, he comes back changed. The phrase used to promote this movie was "Let the world change you and you can change the world." As Ernesto and Alberto ventured out into the world, they were changed by it and they did



change the world.

This film was based on the journals of Che Guevara that he kept on the journey and offers a beautiful glimpse of South America. The scenery and cinematography is quite beautiful and in that sense *The Motorcycle Diaries* has a hint of a travelogue to it. But what really drives the movie is the good-humored interaction between Ernesto and Alberto who are just two friends out to see the world. Their banter and very realistic and human interactions with the people along the way make this a movie worth seeing.

Team Bruckheimer

Joel Elliott reviews *Team America*. Trey Parker and Matt Stone make an action-parody and narrowly avoid becoming the blunt of their own joke

So everyone knows this story by now, even if you haven't yet seen it: the creators of those crude cartoon characters in *South Park* have employed crude puppets for low wages to act out their fondest puppet-master wet dreams of creating a satire on America-vs.-World action film propaganda. Any

illusions that this would be a satire on American foreign policy at large is instantly defeated by the realization that the filmmakers' kind of low brow humour fits much nicer into a more focussed parody. This hypothesis corresponds with my recollection of two of the most dead-on parodies across the whole *South Park* series: the episode where one of the kids gets dumped and becomes a goth, and the one with the group of conspicuously open-minded Mormons. Everything about the Parker/Stone combo speaks to the fact that they've never really been out of Colorado.

Team America: World Police is more or less a take on the epic action flick variety as envisioned by guys like Michael Bay. At best, it's an expose on how Hollywood fiction contributes to pro-American ideology; at its worst it's a mock-piece that pulls punches wherever it can and hilariously succeeds at points and fails miserably at others. Interestingly enough, it brings to mind the fact that the type of conven-



tions it mocks are fairly recently established—even, dare we say, post 9/11. Whether the tradition started before or after 9/11, the implications of this tumultuous event have largely informed—well ok, entirely informed—the relative ideological position of every film made since; given any subject matter

remotely connected to terrorism, which apparently is most. *Team America* is no different, parody or not, and the terrain is definitely one that takes itself dead seriously. Case in point: *Hot Shots*, circa 1991, allowed for a vast amount of whimsical parody because its topic was the cheesy romance of the 1980's, ala Tony Scott. You'd think the cold war was a grim period, but Hollywood's fetishization of the apocalypse was never more obtuse than in *Armageddon* (here I figure 'terrorists' just replaced 'giant meteor' with relative ease), and so Parker and Stone don't quite have their work cut out for them in the same way that someone would in parodying a film like *Top Gun*. By the way, if you haven't seen *Hot Shots* before, drop this paper right now and proceed to a video store.

Given the limited range of parody, it's somewhat disappointing that *Team America* often picks the most obvious outcome as dictated by the genre, along with some obscene jokes thrown in; as opposed to aggrandizing over-the-top irony, or flirting with expectations in a self-reflexive way, for example. Luckily it works despite this, with the 'over the top' dimension existing at least implicitly in the fact that all the

characters are puppets who can do James Bond-esque acrobatics, and yet somehow always look really awkward. *America's* main 'star', a Broadway actor who gets hired by the anti-terrorist squad to go undercover to infiltrate the terrorists gets a complete surgical re-construction of his face—in a straight parody of John Woo's *Fate of a Hero*—and the result is like a 9-year old girl giving her Barbie a haircut, funny as hell. The rest of the humour stems from the strangely serene facial expressions which the puppets get in close-up as they sentimentalize their



way through the action/romance, the "It's a bomb...with a timer!" line, and the fact that the Korean dictator/arms dealer mixes up his 'L's and 'R's in his ballad "I'm so Lonely". Then again, some of the

gags are unforgivably embarrassing: Michael Moore as a overeating slob, and a would-be terrorist (um...what the fuck?), and generally speaking the whole mockery of anti-war rallying celebrities, who all get killed in a mess of puppet-gore, is pretty deplorable. I liked it better when giant mutated cartoon celebrities like Robert Smith and Barbara Streisand duke it out while knocking down buildings. Maybe proof that Parker and Stone do it better when they avoid the colossal Paramount feature film domain, and focus on just filling twenty-two minutes.

The DaVinci Code Simplified

Aaron Gropper reviews *National Treasure*. Disney spits out a riddle with a patriotic twist

National Treasure has a dumbed-down Dan Brown (*Angels and Demons*, *The Da Vinci Code*) story plot, with some American patriotism and enough child-friendly action/romance to keep parents and older siblings awake. What can you expect from the Disney movie-machine. Ben Franklin Gates (Nicholas Cage), a modern day treasure hunter is searching for a "bounty" of historic proportion. Apparently, a collection of Europeans discovered a fortune within the ancient Egyptian tombs and chose to hide the monumental find



within the depths of American soil. To protect this great fortune, the collection of settlers created a secret society known as the Freemasons. By following a network of clues laid out

by previous Freemasons, Cage and his team (Jon Voight, Diane Kruger, Justin Bartha) jump across New England in a desperate yet determined attempt to locate the treasure, while being chased feverishly by the "bad" treasure hunters and the FBI.

The majority of the hunt centers around the Declaration of Independence, which doubles as a treasure map and is stolen by Cage. Given that the FBI put as much energy in trying to locate the document as they

did trying to locate Bin Laden in Afghanistan, you wonder if this is an attempt to increase patriotism in young Americans. Politics aside, the hunt is a fast-paced adventure through

American history. Complete with gun fights (without blood), car chases and a little romance on the side, the plot has just enough holes filled to be entertaining (given that

you do not think too hard) and takes just enough creative liberty to make the entire plot implausible. In essence, *National Treasure* is *Pirates of the Caribbean* for children that are more interested in riddles than pirates. If you want actual riddles to solve, I recommend a real Dan Brown novel,



on the other hand, given that you are solving problems all day in class, maybe this flick is the perfect movie to go see with your little brother.

No Toques Please

Erin Rodgers reviews *It All Happens Incredibly Fast*, a new Canadian film that has broken the overworked clichés.

We've all been told many times that "there's no such thing as a free lunch" and therefore, when I went to see *It All Happens Incredibly Fast*, I was expecting that the payment for the "free lunch" I was being offered would be sitting through an atrocious film. After all, why else would said lunch be offered. To further offend by my critic's sensibilities, the film was Canadian. I hate to rehash this old stereotype, but Canadian films tend to be so boring and, well, Canadian. Exactly how many toque references am I going to have to suffer through at a time when I would normally be blissfully snoozing, was my thought as I made my way into the preview. The film was shown at The Duke of Gloucester, a building that also served as the film's main location. I couldn't help but notice a trace of the same anxiety I felt in the eyes of several of the critics there.

With that bit of unpatriotic film crankiness aside, the film was very enjoyable, and not just in a "good for a Canadian film" sort of way. It is in fact a fairly universal story of a seemingly innocent night out gone wrong.

Now I realize that does not sound that exciting, in fact I can almost hear the yawn that several of you must have let out after reading the above sentence. "Wow, a bar movie, I've never seen that before." Well first of all, it's rude to talk back to the critic, even if it's in my own head, and secondly, the performances in this film are what separate it from many a boring "bar movie". This film is "actorey" in the best sense of the word. Now normally, that means the film is melodramatic, overwrought, etc. In some cases, it means that a film features a performance that is so captivating that it stays with the audience, though unfortunately, it often leaves the film feeling uneven, with all the focus on one actor, leaving the others looking weak by comparison. However, in very rare cases it means a strong ensemble cast that works well together, making each performance much stronger, while allowing for a few characters to really capture the audience's imagination. This last type is the case in *It All Happens Incredibly Fast*.

Two performances are clearly the standouts, Maurice Dean Wind as the mysterious and charming "Stranger" and Trent McMullen as the bartender "Mean Tommy". Unlike many other ensemble pieces though, the other characters seem to be as fully realized and interesting as the hero and villain. In fact, the film refuses to allow any character to be a hero or villain, at least not for long. The many twists and turns of the plot leave the audience constantly guessing. Is the stranger a good Samaritan who saves kind-hearted bartender "Nice Tommy" from a beating while they all wait for the ambulance to arrive, or is he a dangerous figure who will harm those trapped in the bar with him? Who is Mean Tommy? He seems at times set up to be the hero

of the piece, yet has he committed a murder?

The questions even turn metaphysical, leaving the viewer wondering about the nature of both the casual friendships that fill our lives, and the stories we are constantly telling each other. The patrons of the bar do not believe themselves to be friends, only "bar friends", however they seem to resist the Stranger's forced entry into their world and the way his strange stories seem to affect the bar's occupants. Are the Stranger's stories true, are they a warning of the violent side of his nature, or are they merely his way of attempting to entertain? Why do we tell stories in a bar at all? What do tall tales bring to our lives? Are they a way to try to protect ourselves from the truth?

Phew!! All these deep thoughts are too much for one review. Just go see the movie. You'll enjoy it, and there's no mention of toques, snowmobiles or curling.



The Incredibles – Better than Nemo?

Kaitlin Barswich says: maybe not, but it's still an entertaining romp for both kids and adults

Who *doesn't* want to watch a bunch of computer animated characters in red suits running (or, in some cases, flying) all over the place? With *The Incredibles*, PIXAR's first full-length film since *Finding Nemo* (they've also made *Toy Story* and *Monsters, Inc.*), you get to do just that. This is a story of a group of superheroes who are (unfairly, I might add) forced to "disappear" by assimilating into mortal society. The film focuses on one particular family – the Incredibles. There's Mr. Incredible himself (voiced by Craig T. Nelson), his wife Elastigirl (Holly Hunter), and their three children Violet (Sarah Vowell), Dash (Spencer Fox), and Jack Jack (Eli Fucile and Maeva Andrews). Along with their superhero friend, Frozone (Samuel L. Jackson), and fashion designer to the superheroes, Edna Mode (Brad Bird), they must fight the evil Syndrome (Jason Lee).

That's basically the whole plot. And you can probably figure out the ending. Yet, this may be why PIXAR films are so beloved by kids and adults alike: the story works. Just the concept of a family with superpowers trying to behave like normal, everyday people is amusing in itself. Watching it unfold, with Mr. Incredible breaking his car windows by slamming them too hard and Violet constantly using force fields when fighting with her brother Dash, is just the next logical step.



To gauge just how well the film works, I took my 5-year-old niece along when I went to watch it. I figured if she laughed a lot the review would be good, and if she was incredibly bored, the review would be particularly scathing because her boredom would mean that I'd have to do more to entertain her and keep her quiet so that the other reporters in the 'press section' didn't start throwing their popcorn at us.

And the result? She laughed a lot. And was scared at one or two parts (so, if you have young kids, you may need to cover their eyes a couple of times...but, since I'm assuming that the majority of you reading this newspaper are university students, this shouldn't be a pressing problem). Everyone laughed, actually. With sight gags for the kids (and adults too, to be frank) and witty one-liners for the adults, this movie can be enjoyed by practically everyone (with the exception of those people who can only enjoy real-life superhero movies like *Spiderman* and *The Hulk* even though, I may point out, the Hulk was an animated creature).

So, while I personally enjoyed *Finding Nemo* more than *The Incredibles*, I would still recommend the latter. As exam time rolls ever so closer, and you're feeling particularly stressed and in need of some comedic relief, check out *The Incredibles*. You'll wish you had superpowers too.

Everyone is Connected, Even Shania Twain

David O. Russell tackles the big questions in *I Heart Huckabees*, reviewed by Joel Elliott

Philosophy is a hell of a thing for art to try and cover, even when it comes to film. Francis Bacon, who has been considered one of the most 'existential' painters, even dared to say that philosophy has no place in art. My theory is that philosophy, given its project of assuming nothing and reconstructing our basic premises of understanding, is counter-intuitive (I know some philosophy specialist is going to rip apart every word of this sentence). This is not to say that philosophy doesn't rely on innate reasoning, but that it mostly uses 'bottom-up' processes, working with basic phenomena, stimuli, etc. to construct theories. Conversely, art relies on intuition; a 'top-down', subjective creation based on experiences, which inevitably must reflect only part of a much greater whole.

Case in point: while in a Visual Studies course this summer, in my frustration to find a way to give my work that Laconic edge, I opened to a page of Magritte, the great Belgian surrealist. An image of his stood out above the rest: it was called 'Hegel's Holiday', and it featured a painting of an umbrella, which supported a glass of water on top of it. I'll leave you to figure out the pun. I failed to find, however, a deeper meaning to it, and thus didn't get a good mark in the course. Needless to say, I don't plan on taking another studio art course.

It's no surprise then, that *I Heart Huckabees* is not a complete success, even if it far exceeds my efforts on that assignment. It is being tagged as an 'existential comedy', but the affiliation with existentialism is at least half-misleading. A young environmental activist (Jason Schwartzmann) is concerned over a suspicious coincidence, so he hires a husband and wife team (Dustin Hoffman and Lily Tomlin) as his personal "existential detectives". I say the affiliation with existentialism is misleading because the detectives - as any purist will note - are quite

blatantly Hegelian. At one point, Bernard (Hoffman) holds up a blanket as the 'world', and illustrates how every point on the blanket is still essentially the same blanket. He even uses a quote from our friend Magritte. It's only later, after Albert (Schwartzmann) realizes the bumbling couple spying on him 24-7 aren't actually solving his problems that he finds Catherine (Isabelle Huppert), a French girl who also happens to be a *real* existentialist, and defies the detectives' naive positivism in favour of something more practical and emotionally enriching. The lesson: philosophy should be left to the French. Along the way are various obstacles to Albert's true enlightenment; namely, an opportunist (Jude Law) out to steal Albert's position as head of an organization which saves crucial ecosystems from corporate greed, and his fashion model girlfriend (Naomi Watts).

The film has too much slapstick, and the last 15 minutes are pretty much useless, other than to give Shania Twain her thankfully brief cameo, and provide closure that is entirely unnecessary given the fact that the concepts could very well overwhelm the majority of audiences anyway. There was a point before that unfortunate coda that the film reaches a surprising and enlightening moment of transcendence, that still stands out to me as the film's pinnacle moment. Perhaps this is a moot point given the incredible performances on the part of Hoffman, Tomlin, Huppert - and above all, Mark Wahlberg, who portrays a defiant skeptic who comes under the wing of Catherine while establishing a friendship with the disillusioned Albert. In fact if there's no Best Supporting Actor Oscar nominee waiting for Wahlberg, then those responsible are officially a product of the man. Oh yeah, and David O. Russell's patented CGI interlocutors appear this time as tiny digital boxes that represent matter. Quirky, but irresistibly admirable.



I Can DiG! It

Marc Saint-Cyr reviews a new rockumentary that shows the ups and downs of rock 'n' roll

People may have heard several clichéd remarks about how the entertainment industry is "full of ups and downs". Yet few actually realize how chaotic and disastrous it really can be. That's where *DiG!* comes in.

DiG! is a rockumentary that follows two underground bands: the Brian Jonestown Massacre and the Dandy Warhols (best known for their 2003 album *Welcome to the Monkey House*). Stretching over seven years (1996-2004), it records how the relationship between founding members Anton Newcombe (of the BJM) and Courtney Taylor (of the Dandys) disintegrated into a bitter rivalry. This film includes all of the basic ingredients one would expect from a rock-doc (such as drugs, alcohol, fame, money, and power). However, it also delves into the darker regions of the music business by exploring the collapse of the Brian Jonestown Massacre at the hands of Newcombe himself. When Taylor signs a record deal with Capitol Records, Newcombe sees this as a betrayal of the independent musical revolution the two bands vowed to create in 1996. From there, each band goes its separate ways. While the Dandy Warhols go on to shoot \$400,000 music videos and tour through Europe, Newcombe's anti-record-industry fanaticism grows, using the Dandy Warhols as a scapegoat. This goes to almost absurd lengths, notably when Newcombe releases the single "Not If You Were the Last Dandy On Earth", and delivers to the rival band a package containing a bar of soap and the message, "clean up your act" - oh, and a shotgun shell for each of the four Dandys. Add in the constant drug use and you've got a man who's on an inevitable and all-too predictable downward spiral. Sure enough, as the film progresses, more and more people drop out of Newcombe's life (primarily his girlfriend and, one by one, his frustrated fellow band members).

DiG! provides a highly insightful look at both the success and the failure that can accompany a band in the music biz. The many places visited range from music video sets to record company offices to massive concerts around the world. This provides a rarely-seen glimpse into the dark workings of the record industry (the most shocking fact being that record companies lose money on nine out of every ten bands they receive, and count on that one band to recoup the expenses lost in the process). It was kind of like watching Michael Moore reveal the dark secrets of the Bush administration. I kind of got the feeling that the film is biased towards the Dandy Warhols (especially with Taylor as the narrator), yet I never really doubted the validity of the facts either. Whether kicking random people in the face, quarreling with fellow BJM members Joel Gion, Matt Hollywood and Peter Holmstrom or waging war against the Dandys, Anton Newcombe seemed to constantly emanate hostility and madness, shattering any hopes whatsoever of getting his band a record contract.

It's hard to say if there is really a moral to *DiG!*, but if there is, it's this: the hopeful musician can expect to face one of two possible scenarios in the future: either your band will sell out to the evil record company and reap the benefits, or it will stay independent and self-reliant, but fall apart due to drugs, booze and your own swollen ego.

Overall, *DiG!* is a highly entertaining look at the dangers of a rock 'n' roll ego in one of the riskiest businesses out there.

Birth

Nicole Kidman finds her niche and a new haircut

The critical reception thus far for Jonathon Glazer's new film *Birth* has been decidedly negative. It's easy to imagine why: the idea of a rich girl's late husband, reincarnated as a 10-year old boy, coming back to keep his wife from re-marrying is more than a little unsettling. No less so with Glazer's almost naive embrace of the subject matter. I take it that in a world of high-concept fare and serious-minded 'adult' films, a film that could easily pose as both (or neither, for that matter) might leave more than a few people slightly embarrassed.

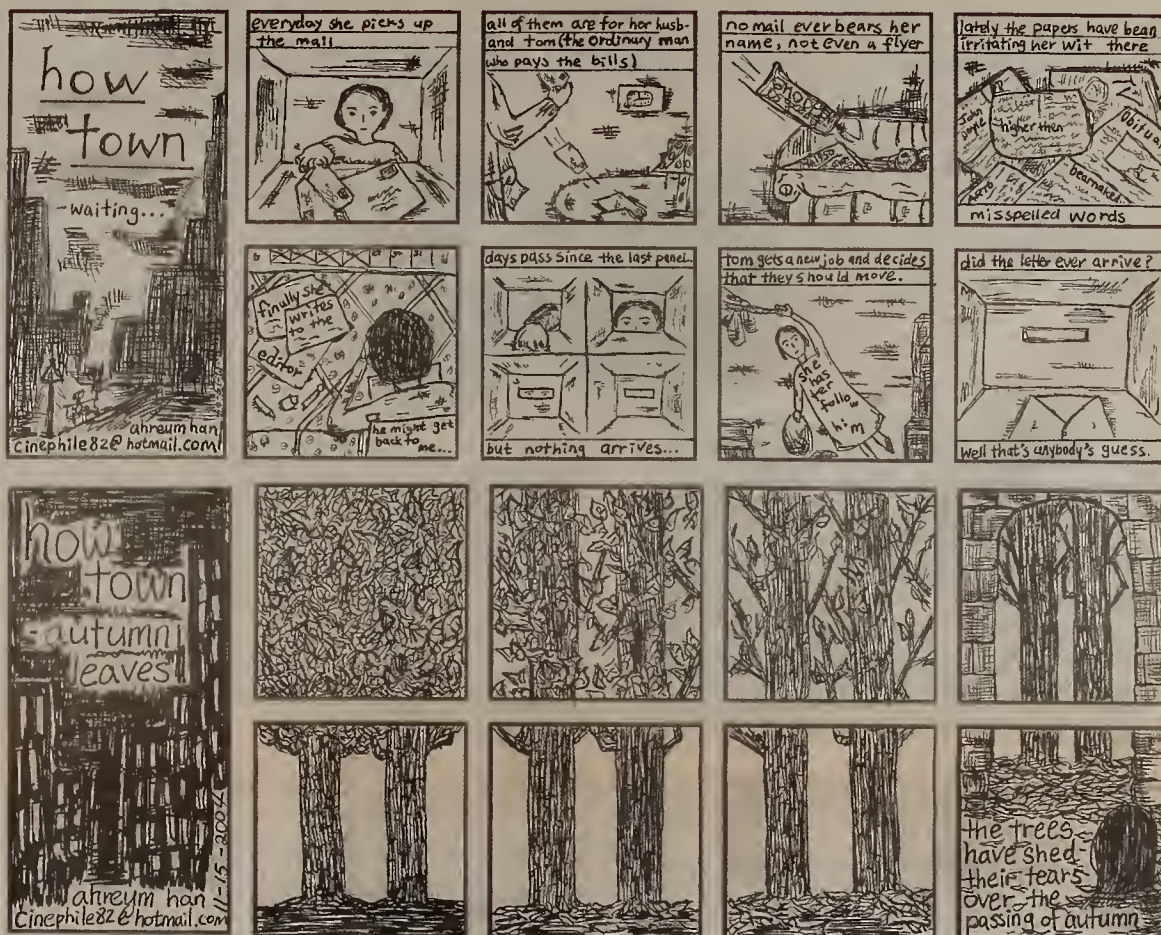
Skeptics aside, *Birth* is a fascinating, if oddly affecting work. Most of its success lies in Nicole Kidman's flawless portrayal of the human struggle to decide whether the impossible is real, or just seems so out of some fleeting hope. Her performance is given its full weight by the

fact that Glazer is unafraid to use *really* long close-ups of his characters, which assert the full weight of the awkwardness which the young boy brings to the lives of the girl and her upright bourgeois family and fiancé. Add to the mix Jean-Claude Carrière, whose scriptwriting resume is about a mile long and includes contributions to Bunuel's finest work, and Godard's *Passion*,



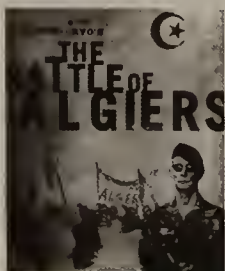
to name a few. He brings the subtle perversity of 'What if...s, and the strong hint of mockery towards the upper classes found in Bunuel's films to *Birth*, which complements its style perfectly. It's almost as if Kidman got a second chance to embody the degradation of the wealthy classes, after most people failed to notice the same effect in *Eyes Wide Shut*.

The result is a baroque, and even slightly gothic, work which is also remarkable in that it gives the most complex role to the child's character (played by 11-year old Cameron Bright), whose quiet confidence in his own identity slowly breaks down just as his presumed wife's belief in her husband's reincarnation begins to concretize. It will be interesting to see what Jonathon Glazer, whose previous film experience includes some really interesting music videos for Radiohead and Massive Attack and a single feature film, *Sexy Beast*, will turn out in the future. *Birth* is a film that definitely rewards viewing with an open mind.



Announcements

The Herald is proud to present a free screening of



starting at 7pm on Thursday, January 27th at Innis Town Hall.

After the movie, Professors William Walker (History and International Film) and Charlie Keil (Documentary Film) will speak on the film and its context, and then there will be a discussion and question-and-answer period.

To all Innis College Students,

You and your guest are cordially invited to the Innis College Formal at the Design Exchange on February 4th, 2005.

Tickets are available starting Friday January 14th for \$50 per person and are on sale from the Innis College Student Society office (rm 105) and suites 232 and 417 at the Innis Residence.

Quantity is limited and ticket prices will rise for the last week of sales.

Come join the rest of the College at one of the best social venues in Toronto!